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On the “Ordinary” Style of Philosophy and the Tradition of the Kyoto School: A Sketch of Clinical Philosophy and Clinical Education in Postwar Japan

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In the field of philosophy in postwar Japan there has been some academic ‘allergic resistance’ to the tradition of the Kyoto School. Some Japanese philosophers in younger generation, directly or indirectly, criticize and dispel it through their efforts to philosophize not in an ‘esoteric’ language of the Kyoto School but in a language that is not far removed everyday speech. They seem to share as the premise the metaphysical schematism as follows: Kyoto/Tokyo, prewar/postwar, esoteric language/everyday speech, scholastic style/own style for philosophy etc.

Interestingly enough, philosophers of the Kyoto School, however, also intended and tried to philosophize on their ‘own’ style in an ‘ordinary’ language. Namely, it can be said that they stood on the same horizon as their critics in a sense, even if their way and their language of philosophy sometimes seemed to us to be ‘esoteric’ or ‘scholastic’ in appearance. They had their own reasons for the philosophy in such a style, and we should take its necessity into consideration in their own context.

This paper aims to sketch out the philosophical heritage of the Kyoto School in postwar Japan and tries to find out a prime example of such heritage in its idea of the ‘toward the ordinariness in daily life’. This philosophical heritage has especially been developed under the concept of the clinical (Rinsho in Japanese, 臨床) in various fields such as clinical philosophy, clinical psychology, clinical science of nursing as well as clinical pedagogy. In this paper, it is described what the fundamental ideas of the clinical are and what kind of concerns and possibilities they have.

One week before the international symposium for *Education and the Kyoto School*, Paul Standish, Naoko Saito, Takashi Iida and I had a colloquium on “*Beyond the Self* and replacing the subject of philosophy” at the annual meeting of the History of Educational Thought Society in Tokyo. Let me begin with continuing the discussion at the colloquium. A co-presenter, Takashi Iida (飯田隆 1948-), indicated in his presentation that “philosophical language in Japan began to mature in the 1960’s” (Iida 2013, p. 4). He continued to describe the history of the postwar Japanese philosophy as follows: Some younger philosophers after the 1960’s such as Shozo Ohmori (大森莊蔵 1921-1997), Yoshimichi Nakajima (中島義道 1946-), Hitoshi Nagai (永井均 1951-) etc. “tried to conduct philosophical discussions in a language that is not far removed from everyday speech. In this way, they wanted to dispel the esoteric style of pre-war Japanese philosophy, represented by the Kyoto School around Nishida Kitaro [(西田幾多郎 1870-1945)]” (ibid.). Incidentally, Iida himself was a former student of Ohmori.

Though I knew the fact that there had been strong resistance to the Kyoto School in the postwar Japanese philosophy, this comment clearly reminded me of it again. As for me, I had a career of studying and of teaching at Kyoto University and I have an impression that the tradition

of the Kyoto School is partly, but surely still alive here. Moreover, one can say that this tradition has been inherited not only in the field of philosophy in a narrow sense, but also in the wider philosophical field linked with religious studies and philosophy of education around the Kyoto University.

I imagine that the "maturity" of Japanese philosophical language to which Iida referred would be concerned with a relative decline of the status of *philological* studies in philosophy. There are struggles for hegemony between philosophy and philology not only in the field of philosophy, but also in other humanities and social sciences such as religious studies, historical studies or educational studies. Iida gave evidence on this matter that "Ohmori was also one of the philosophers who introduced analytic philosophy in post-war Japan, and this was not unrelated with his conscious efforts to make his philosophical style much closer to everyday speech". In fact, Ohmori strictly tried to philosophize not in too much academic terminological language which were translated from Chinese or Western philosophies, but in his own ordinary language.

The Language of this new "Tokyo School of ordinary-language-philosophy", we call it so by way of experiment, is far different from that of the Kyoto School, although philosophers of the Kyoto School also tried to philosophize in "ordinary" Japanese (1). Ohmori and his students regard using their own mind in their own language as one of the most important activities of philosophy, and criticize the traditional way of philosophical studying in Japan for being *scholastic*. They believe that philological interpretation has been considered more important than necessary in such a tradition. In addition many of them specialize in analytic philosophy and history of science, and therefore they use never "religious language" like Nishida and Keiji Nishitani (西谷啓治 1900-1990), but "scientific language". The critics of the Kyoto School seem to share as the premise the metaphysical schematism as follows, though it is not sure that they are valid and reasonable or not:

Kyoto / Tokyo

prewar / postwar

esoteric language / ordinary language or everyday speech

religious philosophy / analytical philosophy in scientific language

a scholastic or highbrow style / an own style for philosophy

I make an additional remark here that there is another tradition of "Japanese ordinary-language-philosophy" in a different meaning, that is, from Tetsuro Watsuji (和辻哲郎 1889-1960) and Shuzo Kuki (九鬼周造 1888-1941) to Megumi Sakabe (坂部恵 1936-2009) and Sumihiko Kumano (熊野純彦 1958-), who all once studied or study at the University of Tokyo and tried and try to construct ethics based on Japanese spiritual cultures. Because of this purpose, their thoughts are expressed in softly splendid and beautiful Japanese, or in the harmonized language between *Kango* (classic Chinese) and *Yamato-kotoba* (old Japanese regarded as *native*). Such a characteristic is somehow shared also by Kiyokazu Washida (鷲田清一 1949-), who studied at Kyoto University and is one of the representative Japanese philosophers of today.

Anyway, the efforts to philosophize in ordinary language by philosophers who inherited the tradition of the Kyoto School have recently been made in the development of the idea of the "clinical" (*Rinsho* in Japanese, 臨床). For example, Bin Kimura (木村敏 1931-), a philosopher and a representative phenomenological-anthropological psychiatrist in Medical School at Kyoto

University, who is deeply influenced not only by Victor von Weizsäcker and Martin Heidegger but also by Nishida's philosophy, develops his original standpoint as *clinical philosophy*. Hayao Kawai (河合隼雄 1928-2007), the first Jungian analyst in Japan and a pioneer of *clinical psychology*, was founded with Shuji Wada (和田修二 1932-) the chairs for *clinical pedagogy* in Graduate School of Education at Kyoto University and whose professorships were and are taken by Norio Sumeragi (皇紀夫 1940-), Satoji Yano (矢野智司 1954-), Tadashi Nishihira (西平直 1957-) and Naoko Saito (齋藤直子).

Around these circles there is another tradition from Motomori Kimura (木村素衛 1895-1946), a former student of Nishida, via Akira Mori (森昭 1915-1976) who was a former student of Tanabe and Kimura and created firstly the chair of Anthropology of Education at Osaka University in Japan, to Tsunemi Tanaka (田中毎実 1947-), a Mori's last student, who develops Mori's philosophy and anthropological pedagogy into the clinical theory of human becoming at Kyoto University.

Furthermore, the aforementioned philosopher Kiyokazu Washida founded the chair for *clinical philosophy* at Osaka University, which was the first institution formally named clinical philosophy in Japan.

They all intend to express their theoretical and practical activities as the "clinical" in the meaning of being rooted in everyday life and in ordinary language. In addition, it is also characteristic that they collaborate in an interdisciplinary way with the theoretical and practical knowledge of medicine, psychology, anthropology, education and the science of nursing. By making such collaboration, they also try to make a reformation and reorganization of the system of sciences.

The idea of *Rinsho* became so popular among the academic world in Japan especially from the beginning of the 1980s and it spread out so widely into Japanese society that one might call this situation a sort of *Rinsho*-boom. It was 1988 that the first chair named *Rinsho-Kyoiku* (clinical pedagogy) in Japan was founded at Kyoto University, and it was 1992 that *What is Clinical Knowledge?* by Japanese philosopher Yujiro Nakamura (中村雄二郎 1925-) was published, which was accepted as a kind of manifesto for the clinical philosophy. Today there are many chairs, courses and departments which are titled *Rinsho* in Japanese Universities, even besides medical schools.

What they mean with the term *Rinsho* or the clinical is, in a word, a close connection between theory and practice par excellence. This concept, however, has wider connotation than its appearance. Etymologically to say, the concept of *Rinsho* (the clinical) has a literal meaning "to be at bedside" or straightforwardly to say, "to face death". Therefore, when they use the term *clinical*, they do neither merely mean anything ordinary nor anything plain and simple, nor inseparability from everyday life and everyday practice, much less using "non-esoteric Japanese" in philosophy.

It is truly very interesting and important to think of the reason why they named their standpoint as "clinical", and moreover, why this concept somehow seemed to come from the tradition of the Kyoto School. But due to limitation of space and of my ability, a detailed discussion and reasoning are not possible here. Instead, let me give some hints on this matter only through referring to some common characteristics between the Kyoto School of philosophy and those who come out with a *Rinsho* or clinical principle in their theories and practices(2).

When I consider common characteristics among them, I might notice at least that they

understand their theoretical and practical activities under the following tasks:

1. Always to be closely related to death, or at least, to the possibility of death
2. To answer the question of life “here and now”
3. To live a unique life as a concrete case in which universality in some sense incarnates
4. To be responsible for calling from others and the inner self
5. To have sensitivity how to narrate and what kind of languages are used

Behind these tasks there are latent dimensions where it is intended, whether consciously or unconsciously, to solve the metaphysical problems by overcoming dichotomies as follows:

1. immanent / transcendent
2. present / eternal
3. particular / universal
4. individual / communal

Because it might actually be impossible to build a bridge over these poles, people in modern society have been dreaming to overcome them. It is a contradiction if both poles of these metaphysical dichotomies simultaneously exist together. However, both philosophers of the Kyoto School and those luminaries who stand on the *Rinsho* position regard such a nature of *coincidentia oppositorum* (Nicolas of Cusa) not only as a moment of overcoming of modernity, but they also find it as “ordinariness” in daily life. It is sure to me that they indicate a contradictory phase of human life and try to produce the philosophical dynamism through basing on this nature of contradiction. Namely the existence of contradiction is for them never a matter to be solved, but rather a positive possibility as such, because it can make a moment of deconstruction of the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) and that of renewal of life itself.

This standpoint to view a contradiction not in a negative light led also the result that philosophers of the Kyoto School expressed their own thoughts in a particular way of writing. For example, the philosophical style and language of Nishida was so unique and “so eccentric” (Hideo Kobayashi) that he was frequently criticized for it. Sometimes it is said that the form and the content of his philosophy are coincident with each other. Toshiaki Kobayashi correctly points out that the characteristic phrase of Nishida “...nakereba naranu” (cannot help being so; have to be so) which appears very frequently in his texts is the necessary expression in and through which Nishida executes the *epoché* of the natural and trivial world (Kobayashi 1997, p. 27).

On the contrary, we might lead a possibility to ask from the case of Nishida whether everyday speech is so “natural” and so “simple” as it is believed in general or not, and also whether the “ordinariness” of the ordinary language which antagonists of the Kyoto School assumed is a kind of *phantasma* or not.

Anyway, as Standish suggests in *Education and the Kyoto School of Philosophy*, in order to understand the originality of the Kyoto School, it is necessary to realize that “the path for philosophy in Japan was laid not just by the reading of the canonical texts that were taken to define the subject but also by the very forms of expression, the language, in which they were written” (Standish & Saito eds. 2012, p. 5). Here it is not our task to make a decision whether or not such a “strategic” way of expression in the Kyoto School can be defined as “esoteric” as Ohmori and his students described, but we can precisely say it is also “logical” at least. When the

meanings of *its necessity* are to be considered seriously, the significance of their struggles for creating the Japanese philosophy can be realized and we can understand what kind of philosophical paths lead from the tradition of the Kyoto School to today.

NOTES

1. The Japanese language in the early modern Japan, where Nishida made hard efforts to produce new modern Japanese for philosophy in the meaning of European science, was undergoing a transition, not only because of the importation of Western cultures but also because of the reform of Japanese writing system such as *Genbun'itchi* movement.
2. The clinical studies such as clinical philosophy and clinical pedagogy are, to all appearances, somehow similar to so called applied philosophy, but never same as it. The Rinsho-ness doesn't mean the application of "academic" philosophy to the matters of everyday life. Its aim is not to apply something to someone, but to find out together a new meaning which is hidden and unknown in the life of the parties concerned, and to change the living world together.
3. Therefore, in the activities of Rinsho the fundamental passivity, receptiveness and readiness for the self-transformation are more demanded than activity of application.
4. The original version of this paper was presented at The 6th International Symposium between the Graduate School of Education, Kyoto University (Japan), and the Institute of Education, University of London (UK).

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